



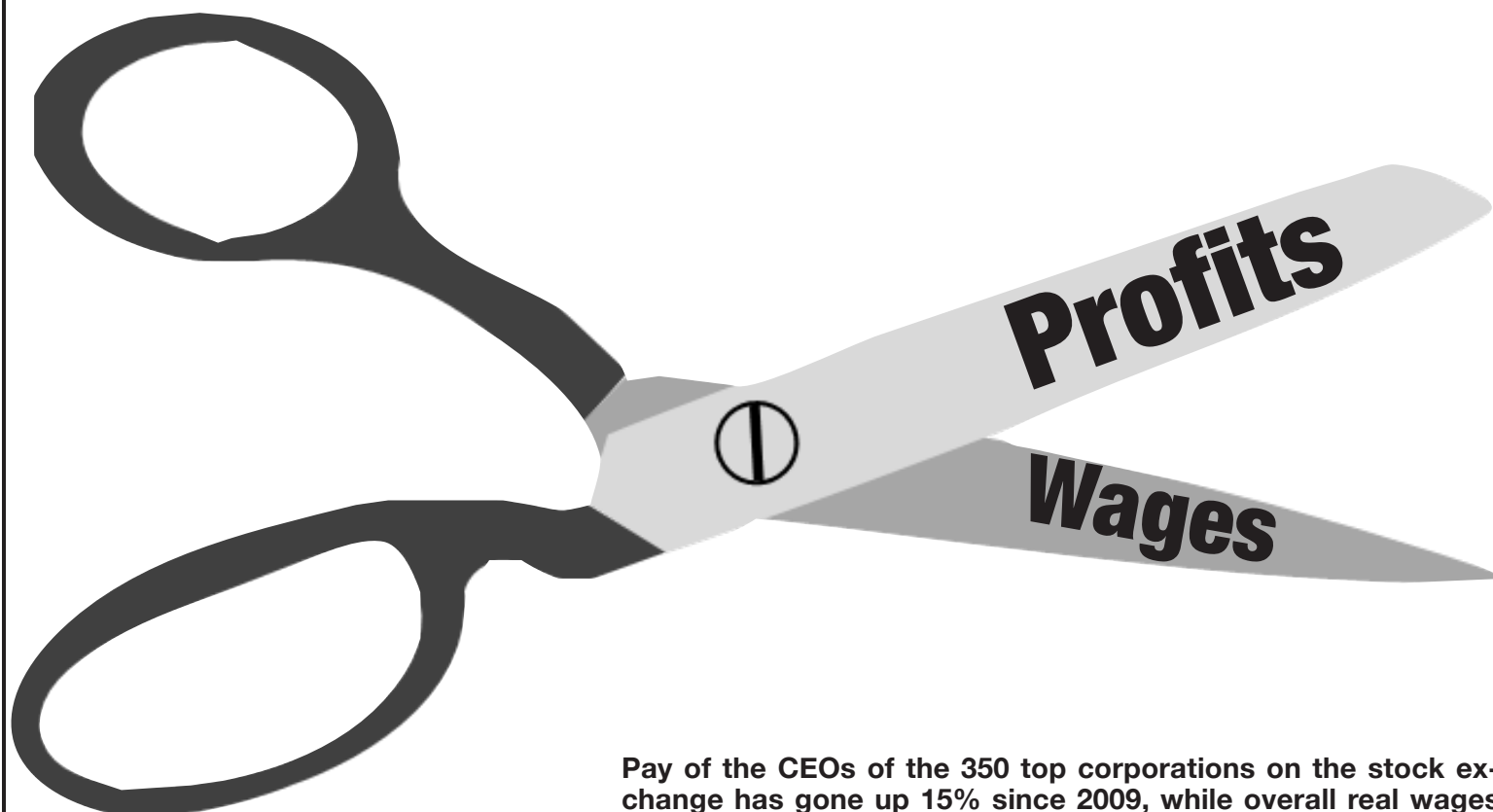
Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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THE TORY SCISSORS



Pay of the CEOs of the 350 top corporations on the stock exchange has gone up 15% since 2009, while overall real wages have fallen.

Profit rates (net rate of return for private non-financial corporations) were at long-term highs before 2008. They dropped to 10% in early 2009. By late 2014 they were back up to 14% (40% higher), and they have been around the same or only a little less since then.

Share prices, measured by the FTSE100 index, have gone up 91%. The tiny minority who own a lot of shares have seen their wealth nearly double.

Those who already own expensive houses, a bigger minority but still very much a minority, have also seen their wealth soar.

Between 1955 and the 1980s, wealth was steady around 2.5 times national income. Today, it's nearer 7. Wealth, and incomes from wealth, have increased much faster than wages even when wages have risen.

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Inside:



Fast food workers strike

Workers from McDonald's, Wether-spoon's, TGIFridays and UberEats couriers struck on Thursday 4 October.

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Building unity in Israel/Palestine

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30 years on: the Rushdie Affair

Solidarity discusses what happened with *The Satanic Verses*.

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Join Labour!

A look at the new Tribune magazine

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The Daily Mail of the left

By Andrew Coates

[The French daily] *Le Monde* recently published a long article on what they call the “anti-immigrant/anti-migrant” left: a “left” in favour of national sovereignty and closing borders.

The French daily cites the German Aufstehen movement of Sahra Wagenknecht, the “ambiguities” of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s La France Insoumise, and Danish Labour and ‘populist’ left forces. (t.co/BgFsJZZdaR)

Lo and behold the *Morning Star*, Britain’s leading organ of the pro-Brexit left, has just published this (in the Saturday/Sunday print edition):

Title: “Time to get tough with the EU and our own anti-democrats”.

Blurb: “The benefits of being free of the EU neoliberal restrictions far outweigh anything else, writes Jacqui Johnson.”

Article: “What do we do when we are free of the membership fee and from the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice? Any of these things is complex, open to offers and counter-offers, stand-offs and compromises, but none overrides the ending of our EU membership.”

Johnson then proclaims, as a very prominent “benefit”

“Leaving means freedom to control our own borders. Immigration policy can be part of a comprehensive employment plan based on equal rights for all who live and work here.

“The benefits of being free of all of these neoliberal restrictions on our economic prospects far outweigh anything else. Rebuilding and transforming Britain does not depend on trading arrangements, it depends on investment in our people to produce and transform society. You can’t trade if you can’t produce.”

The anti-migrant writer of this

article, Jacqui Johnson, is former president of NATFHE, now UCU.

She is, by no coincidence at all, linked to the notorious “Trade Unionists Against the EU” which received funds from far-right millionaire Arron Banks.

At this year’s TUC fringe we find Johnson appearing again at this meeting:

“Embrace Brexit — rebuild and transform Britain.

“Brexit offers opportunities we never had while members of the EU. This is now being recognised by almost everyone, even the *Guardian*. Jeremy Corbyn said, ‘the next Labour government will ... [take] advantage of new freedoms outside of the EU to allow government to intervene to protect our industrial base’. The speakers will explore the opportunities offered by Brexit and discuss how the trade union movement can take part in this most exciting phase in the history of our country. Contributions from the floor will be welcome.

“Speakers: Mick Whelan (General Secretary, ASLEF), Sarah Wooley (BFAWU), Kelvin Hopkins (MP), Professor Costas Lapavistas (author of *Left Case Against the European Union*)

“Chair: Jacqui Johnson (former President NATFHE/UCU)”

Among her further comments we find this:

“It is no accident either that one of the most virulent asset-strippers of Greece, former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, manages to drape himself in ‘left-wing’ colours. He wants to stay in the EU, “but not this EU”.”

“It’s no accident”...

How that hackneyed phrase reminds one of the Stalinist origins of these horrible, nationalist arguments, promoted by the *Daily Mail* of the left, the *Morning Star*.

• First published on tendance-coates.wordpress.com



UK farming relies heavily on migrant labour

Immigration after Brexit

By Rosalind Robson

A long-awaited government White Paper on plans for post-Brexit immigration law, to be published this autumn, was heavily trailed during Tory Party conference.

If the Tories have their way it will be far from business as usual on travel and immigration between the UK, Europe and the rest of the world after January 2021.

New laws would establish a single immigration system. Migrants from the EU will be treated in the exact same way as non-EU migrants.

The system will favour so-called high-skills migrants, from wherever they come from in the world. The government has indicated that it will scrap the cap (currently 20,700) on the number of high-skill (non-EU) migrants entering the UK. And that it will review the £30,000 salary threshold on entrants. 76% of current EU migrants would not meet that threshold.

The government have said low-skilled migrants will be allowed into the UK in strictly limited numbers, e.g. farmers will be allowed to bring in labourers during the harvest season.

This may, say the government, be facilitated by the extension of the youth mobility scheme. Currently (low paid) young workers from a selected number of countries such as New Zealand, Australia and

Canada are allowed to come to the UK to work for a limited period of time.

In addition the UK will bring in a US-style system where people from so-called safe countries (presumably including all of the EU) will be able to travel to the UK for short periods of time (e.g. for a holiday) only if they apply for a special authorisation.

In this way, background checks will be made in advance of travel on every non-UK citizen coming into the country. The US system was brought in in 2009 and added a layer of security checks that were not there before. In other words post-Brexit the UK will be similar to the US, a very tough border regimes.

EU politicians have responded negatively to these proposals.

UK citizens who want to work in the EU in the future will not like these proposals. It is likely that EU workers will still have some preferential treatment and UK workers in Europe likewise. But the government remains very vague on what that might be, or what it wants that to be. They have said they will negotiate to ensure student exchange schemes will continue.

Not all UK bosses like it either, because the implied restrictions on “low-skills” workers will impact on their business, especially construction, social care, hospitality and retail bosses.

The government has justified

those restrictions on the premise that low skilled migrants drive down wages. But the Migration Advisory Committee report on which this policy was based does not justify that premise.

Inevitably these policies will lead to more scapegoating of migrants — the unjustifiable claim that migrants drive down wages has become common sense, even among some on the left.

Labour should be much clearer in its defence of migrants and refugees and could start by opposing these policies.

We need to keep up our arguments against Brexit and all it brings with it, in defence of free movement and its extension to workers around the globe.

Student news: reading groups and strike ballots

By Susan McGee

Workers’ Liberty students have been busy running stalls at Freshers Fairs across the country in the last month.

We are organising campus meetings on left antisemitism as well as weekly reading groups, some on our new book *In Defence of Bolshevism*.

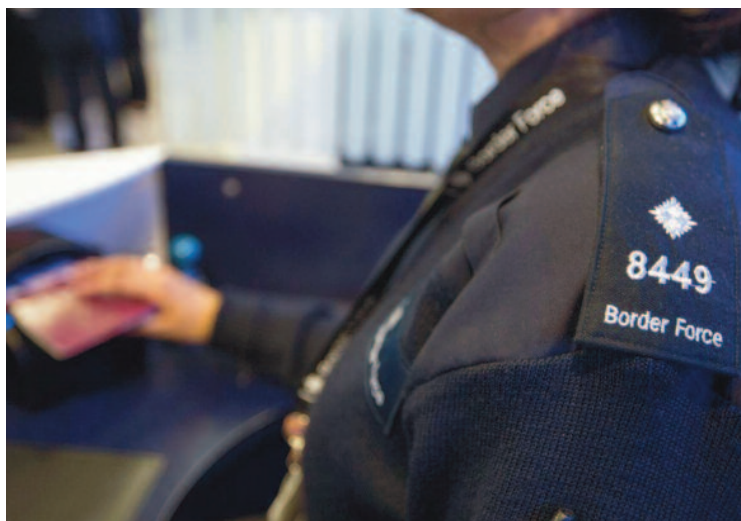
Alongside other student activists who attended last month’s Student Activist Weekender, we are busy campaigning for a yes vote in the UCU pay ballot.

Email: againstfeesandcuts@gmail.com if you’d like a copy of the National Student Left Bulletin, produced by attendees of the Student Activist Weekender.

On November 17-18 student activists from across the country will come together again to launch a national student left organisation, active in NUS and Labour Students.

There will also be a planning meeting for the newly launched Socialist Feminist Campus Collective.

Get in touch at tinyurl.com/SocFem to find out more and order copies of the first issue of their zine.



Controlling borders

Stop Tory Brexit, general election now

Join the Another Europe is Possible bloc on Saturday 20 October and march against Brexit

Meet from 11am outside the Hard Rock Cafe on Old Park Lane/Piccadilly, W1K 1QZ



Fight for £10 and union rights!

By Simon Nelson

Workers from McDonalds, Wetherspoons and TGI Fridays all took part in an international co-ordinated day of action for £10 per hour and union rights on Thursday 4 October.

In London they were joined by Deliveroo and Uber Eats riders, and supporters from across the labour movement. At their rally and demonstration in Leicester Square they were joined by traffic wardens in Camden Unison, who are also currently on strike for a £11.15 an hour.

Solidarity action took place in cities across the UK. The first Wetherspoons strike was also coordinated from two sites in Brighton.

Around 250 people made it to Le-



icester Square for the demonstration in support of the strike with speakers from Unite, who organise in TGI Fridays, the Bakers Union, and representatives from French and US McDonalds campaigns who were also taking part in the action.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell MP addressed the crowd saying, "a Labour government will guarantee full employment rights from day one," and guaranteeing the a £10 per hour living wage.

McDonnell also said that all Labour MPs had been notified that when there is a strike in their constituency, it is their duty to attend the picket. Given that McDonnell and others were criticised for attending junior doctors' picket lines in 2016, this is a welcome step forward.

However, missing from the speech was a commitment to a Labour government making the right of unions to organise and carry out effective action easier, by repealing all of the existing anti trade union laws. This is already Labour Party policy but over which

the leadership have been silent.

The demonstrations and days of action are an important part of an ongoing campaign to organise these workers, inspired by the US "Fight for \$15 Campaign".

The Wetherspoons strike has taken some time to build and the workers there have a functioning Bakers' Union branch that is prepared to do ongoing activity.

The TGI Fridays campaign is well organised around particular branches.

The McDonalds stores are more isolated and there is a longer way to go with permanent organisation in any of their stores.

However, the national and international attention that has been put on the campaign demands is another important step forward.

No worker you cannot organise

Justine, a striking McDonalds worker, spoke at their rally:

"It is exciting that there are so many people here and people from other McDonalds have come to support us in Brixton. The reason why I'm on strike and decided to join the union is because I believe that workers deserve better wages — the situation is crap right now!"

"What is particularly inspiring about this campaign is that we were workers who were previously viewed as unorganisable by the labour movement, people who would drift in and out of work and we weren't worth a union's time."

"McStrike has proven that there is no worker that you cannot organise. There is no workforce that can-

not be inspired to go out on strike and fight for their rights. Having Wetherspoons, TGI Fridays, the Couriers, The Ivy House all come out show that young workers are willing to come out fighting, and it is possible for us to win!"

"I am inspired by all that work here today. I think it is only possible for our campaign to win if we have a united class, a united workforce and that means it is vital we defend the rights of migrant workers, and free movement within the labour movement within the Labour Party."

"It is impossible for us to win if we have a divided class and the McStrike can win only if we start to build our unions and not build borders."

Falling off a pensions cliff

By Colin Foster

Protests are growing among women now in their early 60s who find their state pension age receding fast as they get older.

Although Britain's first old age pensions, from 1908, were payable only over 70 years old, for many decades after Labour's welfare-state reforms from 1945 the pension age seemed fixed at 65 for men and 60 for women.

With more working-class people living longer, the Thatcher and Major Tory governments started the axe. From 1995 the law was changed. Blair and Brown let the Tory changes proceed, and then in 2011 Cameron made them markedly worse.

In the supposed name of equality, the pension age is due to rise for everyone to 68. The effect is much worse for women, whose pension age becomes eight years older, than for men, who have to wait only three more years.

The women affected now are women who grew up and planned their lives on an apparently-fixed pension age of 60, and now find it disappearing. Even worse, they complain that the Government has made little effort to tell them about the change, and some find out only when on the edge of retirement.

The last women to get a state pension at 60 were those born in April 1950. The women's pension age then increased fairly slowly until 2016, when women born in February 1953 were getting their pensions at age 63.

Then, a sudden increase, legislated in 2011: those born in November 1953 are getting their pensions only at age 65.

By October 2020 both men and women born in October 1954 will be getting pensions at age 66, and after that the pension age for both men and women will rise simultaneously, towards 68 for both and then further.

Campaigners are trying to get a change in government policy by judicial review.

A parliamentary committee has called for transitional arrangements to help women who had never planned to, and can't, work until 66, and now find themselves walking off the edge of a cliff.

• bit.ly/bkto60

Uber: respect our digital picket line!

By Charlotte Zalens

The first nationally-coordinated strike by Uber drivers took place on Tuesday 9 October for 24 hours.

The strike is being coordinated by the United Private Hire Drivers (UPHD) branch of the IWGB union, and will see protests at Uber offices in London, Birmingham and Nottingham. People were urged by the union and supporters to respect the "virtual picket line" and not to use the app for the 24-hours of the strike.

Drivers are calling for an end to unfair deactivations of drivers, for an increase in fares to £2 per mile from the current £1.25 in London,

and a 10% reduction in commissions paid by drivers. They are also calling for the 2016 tribunal judgement, which decreed drivers were not self-employed "independent contractors", to be enforced as soon as possible.

UPHD branch chair James Farrar said, "After years of watching take-home pay plummet and with management bullying of workers on the rise, workers have been left with no choice but to take strike action. We ask the public to please support drivers by not crossing the digital picket line by not using the app during strike time."

The IWGB has another ongoing case against Uber which will be in court again on 30 and 31 October.

Biggest ever turnout for “troublemakers”

By Cliff Offerdahl

On Saturday 29 September 2018, Labor Notes, an organisation of US-based trade union activists held its annual Trouble-makers’ School in New York City.

Established in 1979, Labor Notes is famous for its publications and workshops on rank-and-file activism. In their own words, they are “the voice of union activists who want to put the movement back in the labor movement”.

With over 350 attendees, this year’s school was the largest yet. The opening plenary, featuring Alexandra Bradbury of Labor Notes, Mark Cohen of Teamsters for a Democratic Union, and Jia Lee of the Movement of Rank-and-File Educators stressed the need to establish a “culture of control by members” within the unions. They reminded us that many of the most impressive industrial actions in living memory, such as the Teamsters’ 1997 UPS workers strike, were built upon internal fights for union democracy.

Such lessons take on a special significance in the current context of the US labour movement. On the one hand, we have recently seen powerful spikes in union combativeness as the West Virginia teachers’ strike, which rank-and-file members drove to spectacular effect from the grassroots despite conflict with union leaders and the fact that public sector strikes are illegal under West Virginia state law. On the other hand, between the US Supreme Court’s ruling this June in *Janus v AFSCME* and the 27 US states with “right-to-work” laws, unions are having to operate in an “open shop America”.

In a session on immigration speakers from the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, the Legal Services Staff Association, the Worker Resource Center, and Brandworkers International, outlined the various tactics and strategies that unions and workers’ centres are adopting to protect immigrants from depor-

tation.

The Trump Administration has heightened animosity towards immigrants (especially those from Muslim or Latin American backgrounds) and ratcheted up the horrifying detention and deportation practices of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

The speakers emphasised the need for families to have in-place emergency plans in the event of an accident or raid, including safety hotlines and documents like power-of-attorney forms. Whilst New York City has been declared a “sanctuary”, the police still send information to ICE upon arrest. ICE have therefore tended to wait in plain clothes outside of courthouses to grab undocumented immigrants due for hearings.

This continued practice of data sharing results from a major concession by centre-left politicians who felt they had made a worthwhile gain around immigration reform.

EXAMPLE

One horrifying example of how political concession betrays migrants is the case of Pablo Villavicencio Calderon, a pizza delivery man.

He had ICE called on him when his New York State ID was not sufficient to enter the Brooklyn army base to which he had delivered on previous occasions with no problem.

Mercifully, Villavicencio Calderon was eventually released from detention. Nevertheless, it is further worth noting that, because of police-ICE data sharing, stop and frisk can easily lead to deportation proceedings where undocumented migrants are charged with minor offences, even if the search was itself performed unlawfully.

ICE workplace audits function as raids by another name, since they come with arrests. For example, at a Queens outlet of the Tom Cat Bakery, two dozen migrant workers have been dismissed with a minuscule severance

package of one week’s pay per year of service as a direct consequence of an ICE audit. 800 workers disappeared at the Clover Hill Bakery in Chicago because they were found to have insufficient documentation.

As well as getting trade unions to become sanctuaries, as Teamsters Joint Council 16 have done in New York City, unionised workers can push ICE to extend the deadlines for audits and educate people on how ICE often tricks supervisors into letting them into workplaces.

You have to understand the Janus decision in the light of the “right-to-work” (open shop) in the American conservative sense of the term. “Right-to-work” statutes prohibit mandated union membership and dues.

They impose a duty on unions to represent employees in the workplace who are not themselves union members. This results in workers viewing themselves as entitled to one of the main immediate benefits of union membership (representation in workplace disputes) without providing financial support to the union itself.

In this context, “right-to-work” allows bosses to undermine unions in the name of upholding personal liberty. It reinforces what *Solidarity* has called the “insurance policy” image of a union as providing a personal service of “protection” in exchange for a fee, rather than as a vehicle for collective action to change the workplace itself.

Janus was decided mere months ago, but employers across the US are already using it to persuade public sector workers to cancel their union membership through emails, mailers, social media advertising, and even house visits. The ruling lets bosses frame the matter as follows: “If the union has to represent you even if you’re not in it, why waste your money on membership dues?”

US activists are emphasising the need to talk to colleagues about the “right-to-work” concept, and of why everyone in the work-



place tangibly benefits from building a union’s collective strength through membership numbers and dues. This means talking about the purpose of unions so that workers stop seeing them as only a means of self-defence in individual disputes.

The closing plenary with Abraham Lobe of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, and Jewel Tolliver, Melissa Brown, and Mike Clancy of Count Me In, wove together many of the day’s main threads. A central illustration of the US labour movement’s present challenges was the ongoing Hudson Yards private real estate development in Chelsea, Manhattan: the largest in the US by square footage. The development site is currently open shop, with non-unionised workers not receiving healthcare or adequate workplace safety.

The speakers pointed out how real estate magnates behind Hudson Yards, like Steven M Ross, want the workers to build a city in which they cannot afford to live themselves. As such, the reminder to such tycoons that “New York is a union town!” takes on a broader political significance than workplace conditions alone.

It is a reminder that, as the classic lyrics go, it is we who “built the cities where they trade”, and we have no intention to “stand outcast and starving ‘mid the wonders we have made”.

Jumbling up history

LETTER

Mike Zubrowski (*Solidarity* 480) is right that to go from saying “all nation states are intrinsically racist” or “all states are racist endeavours” to saying that “Israel”, in particular, is “a racist endeavour”, and therefore should be suppressed (by another state, in fact by a conquering state) is illogical and antisemitic in its implications.

It should also be said that claims that “all nation states are intrinsically racist” or “all states are racist endeavours” are an ahistorical jumble.

Xenophobia is older than states, and, in the great sweep of history, probably has been more restrained than inflamed by states. States are much older than nation states, and much older than racism. Nation states and racism arose in the same (capitalist) epoch, but by quite distinct dynamics.

The highlands of Papua New Guinea, isolated from the rest of the world until the 1930s, with a relatively small population divided into many tiny pre-state communities with hundreds of different languages, have had a high level of inter-community vendetta and violence.

Steven Pinker’s book *The Better Angels of*

Our Nature shows that in general pre-state societies had a higher level of violence than states.

Pre-bourgeois states were generally patrimonial and dynastic. Their members were subjects, not citizens, and defined by who fell under the rule of the emperor, king, prince, whatever, not by being components of a “people”.

Then with the rise of the bourgeoisie, as Marx and Engels put it in the Communist Manifesto, “independent, or but loosely connected provinces, with separate interests, laws, governments, and systems of taxation, became lumped together into one nation, with one government, one code of laws...” Zig-zag, and with many complications, patrimonial states were replaced by nation states — which were a progress on, not a regression from, the patrimonial states.

Racism had a different origin. With the rise of the bourgeoisie came the idea of the formal equality of humanity and of human rights. It could no longer be taken just as par for the course that conquered peoples were enslaved. Around the Atlantic slave trade grew an ideology licensing exceptions to human rights in the name of a hierarchy of “races”.

The very word “race” (in that sense) is only 16th century, and it was a new development for people to identify in a common group

(“race”) together with many millions of others whom they’d never meet and with whom they had no common language or culture, often *against* others whom they had met and with whom they shared some language and culture.

Particularly in the upbuilding of European imperial states in the 19th century, what Benedict Anderson calls “official nationalism” could segue into racism. But the origins and trajectory of nationalism and racism were distinct.

As Anderson puts it: “The fact of the matter is that nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history... The dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of class, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to ‘blue’ or ‘white’ blood and ‘breeding’ among aristocracies” (*Imagined Communities*, p.136).

That nationalism and racism run askew, though sometimes meeting, is shown by the experience of African-Americans, unquestionably American; black South Africans, beyond doubt South African; Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, as Australian as you can get; Aónikenk and other Amerindians,

indisputably Argentinian.

The Bolsheviks deliberately chose a non-national name for the USSR, and a non-national anthem, the Internationale. But the workers’ state was a federation of *national* republics, and in Ukraine, for example, the Bolsheviks followed a deliberate policy of “Ukrainianisation”, a sort of “nationalist” “positive discrimination”, to counter the heritage of Russian domination.

Future workers’ states, for generations into the future, will surely have the same character of federations of national units, within each of which a sort of nationalism operates. That nationalism will soften into a sense of belonging, not necessarily any more hostile to the “other” than my greater attachment to my own daughters signifies hostility to the hundreds of millions of other mid-20s women in the world, long before it vanishes together.

Many of the spurious polemics about Israel equate Israeli nationalism (of all sorts, even the “softest”) with chauvinism and then with racism. The problem with this is not just in the spurious exceptionalisation of Israel, but also in the general blurring-together of nationalism with racism.

Martin Thomas, Islington

The Tory scissors

Theresa May suggests an “end to austerity” if she gets a workable Brexit deal. First get your deal.

Then even the deftest negotiation is going to do no better than limit the damage from Brexit. And by decisions already made by the Tory government, large further cuts in benefits and social spending are pre-programmed for the coming years.

A new survey has just shown 60% of people in favour of higher taxes (in general, not just higher taxes on the rich, as *Solidarity* would advocate) to get more money for schools and the NHS. It's the highest percentage saying that for a long time. In 2010 only 31% said that. We have learned since. May is responding. But it is a feint.

Just since March 2015, tax and benefit changes have lopped 5.5% off the income of the worst-off 10% of households, and substantial percentages off the incomes of all the lower 60% of households. Only the top 40% are (a bit) better off from those changes.

More of the same is pre-programmed.

Child poverty was steady at around 15% of children in the 1960s and 70s. Under the Thatcher Tories it rose to 34% by 1997. Blair and Brown Labour policies did reduce it, though only to 20-odd per cent. Since 2010 it has been rising, up to 33% again.

Why? The big cuts in working-age benefits, plus eroded or stagnant real wages. The very most recent figures show a tiny uptick in real wages, but they are still £12 a week lower, for the average worker, than their peak before 2008.

There are some measures which suggest that inequality has been steady, or even declined a little, since 2008. That they leave out vital dimensions can be seen by contrasting the tax-benefits and wage figures with other statistics.

Pay of the CEOs of the 350 top corporations on the stock exchange has gone up 15% since 2009, while overall real wages have fallen.

Profit rates (net rate of return for private non-financial corporations) were at long-term highs before 2008. They dropped to 10% in early 2009. By late 2014 they were back up

to 14% (40% higher), and they have been around the same or only a little less since then.

Share prices, measured by the FTSE100 index, have gone up 91%. The tiny minority who own a lot of shares have seen their wealth nearly double.

Those who already own expensive houses, a bigger minority but still very much a minority, have also seen their wealth soar.

Between 1955 and the 1980s, wealth was steady around 2.5 times national income. Today, it's nearer 7. Wealth, and incomes from wealth, have increased much faster than wages even when wages have risen.

LABOUR

Labour's 2017 manifesto promised to take £50 billion more in taxes from the rich and well-off — out of the £1,000 billion a year which currently goes to the rich and the very well-off, or to enterprises under their control — and redirect it to the NHS, social care, schools, and some reversal of benefit cuts.

That would leave the dominant position of great wealth largely intact. But it would help. And it might work smoothly in an stable and expanding phase of capitalism.

With Brexit disruption looming, and many signals of a new world capitalist crash not too far away — maybe next year, maybe the year after, we can't know — it is inadequate.

Activists should fight for Labour to commit to democratic and social ownership and control of the big banks and corporations, the great concentrations of wealth in the economy.

And we cannot afford to wait for or rely exclusively on a Labour government, which may not come until a 2022 election, or even then. A large part of the reason for the relative decline of working-class incomes has been the weakness of unions.

Relatively low unemployment now gives the unions a chance to rebuild and reassert themselves. The union leaders are not using that chance. The rank and file should make them do so.

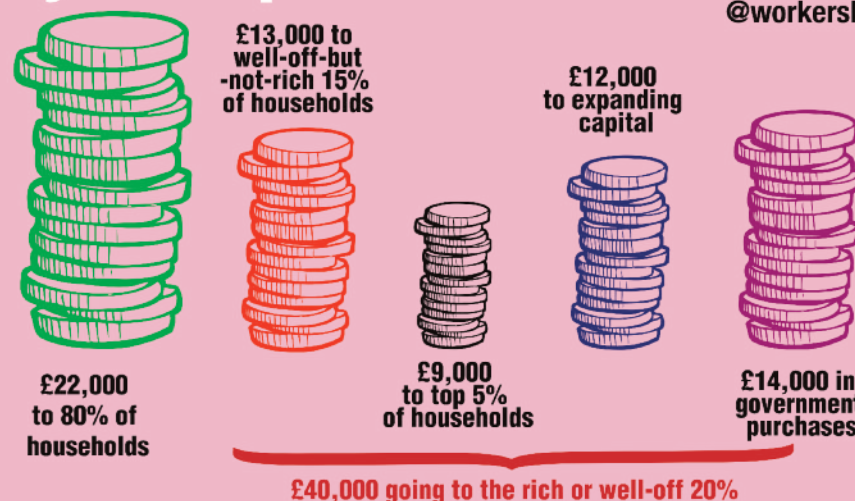
extremely alienated from much of the British left because of its shamefully apologist attitude towards the Chavista movement. I have spent my entire life being all too familiar with Chávez and Maduro's authoritarian tendencies. My own uncle was beaten and black-listed by the police while striking. As such, you can imagine how I've felt putting up with British leftists constantly telling me how grateful I should be for the “Bolivarian Revolution”!

Everything changed in 2015. I returned to the UK from the US in time for the Labour leadership election. Seeing the increasingly palpable chance of Jeremy Corbyn becoming the new Labour leader, I joined the Party and cast my vote. After Corbyn's victory, I committed myself to fight for socialism within the Party's channels. For the first time in years, I felt that a genuine socialist could become Prime Minister!

Nevertheless, even then my socialism was deeply confused. I saw the reason for Marx's focus on class struggle, yet the decades of defeats suffered by the labour movement left

Each worker creates £74,000 a year in products and services

@workersliberty



If we subtract 20% from the employed-workforce total of 32 million for bosses and their high-paid associates, some 26 million workers turn out about £74,000 each in products and services. Of each £74,000:

- about £22,000 returns as wage, benefit, and pension income to the lower 80%, mostly working-class households
- about £9,000 goes in household income to the top 5%
- about £12,000 to expanding capital, from which they benefit most
- about £13,000 in household income to the well-off-but-not-rich 15%
- about £14,000 in government purchases of goods and services, be that medicines for the NHS and books for schools, or Trident missile replacements.

Let's say half to two-thirds of that £14,000 is health, education, and similar spending which should be counted as part of the social wage. That leaves over £40,000 of the average worker's value-added going to the rich or well-off, to the expansion of capital controlled by the rich, and to the expansion of the power and pomp of the state.

Being a revolutionary, not a sceptic

WHY I JOINED THE AWL

By Eduardo Tovar

One of the most positively transformative events in my life was joining the AWL in January 2016. Although I had long considered myself a socialist of some form or other, when I first encountered the AWL in the autumn of 2015, my politics were very ill-defined.

Years of seeing Labour under Blair, Brown, and Miliband had made me view the left as a lost cause in British politics, to the point that I was sceptical of even attempting activism. This is why, to my shame, I distanced myself at age 18 from the then-ongoing 2010 student protests. I had simply become so resigned to the fact that capitalism in the neoliberal era has subsumed everything in human life that I could no longer see the point of mounting resistance.

Moreover, as a Venezuelan, I have often felt

me susceptible to newer calls on the left to seek different terrains on which to fight for socialism. Popular movements, social media networks, automation technologies — basically all the places where what I have come to term the “Verso Left” tries to find substitutes for a class-conscious proletariat! Similarly, I often found myself fluctuating between an evolutionary and a revolutionary socialism.

Through student activism, primarily around tuition fees, I discovered the AWL in October 2015. As well as acquiring vital practical skills as an activist — mobilising for a demonstration, running a stall, planning an action, etc — I returned to Lenin, Engels, and other Marxist thinkers with newfound appreciation. I also learned about the tradition of the Third Camp, which allowed me to articulate my resolutely anti-Stalinist understanding of socialism in a new and exciting way.

Since the AWL is one of the few far left groups that is sharply critical of Chavismo and refuses to hold up Venezuela as “actually existing socialism” (or in transition towards

it), my gravitation to the AWL was rather natural. The real internal obstacle I had to overcome was my intuitive unease over joining a group with explicitly revolutionary aims.

I overcame that unease for two reasons. First, I came to accept that the inevitable ruling class backlash against even Parliamentary socialism makes it impossible to defeat capitalism through reform. Second, I realised that, if I wanted the kind of Third Camp, class struggle, and internationalist views I liked hearing in the AWL to succeed in the broader labour movement, then I needed to have the discipline and organisation to fight for them in the Labour Party, the unions, and the student movement.

Nearly three years later, I am thankful for having made my leap of faith and joined! With the AWL, I have developed richer perspectives on anti-imperialism, antisemitism, and many other topics.

From campus occupations to conference interventions, it's been quite the wild ride, but I wouldn't have it any other way!

Uniting Jewish and Arab worker

Yacov Ben Efrat and Assaf Adiv are leading members of the Organisation for Democratic Action (ODA-Da'am), a socialist organisation active in Israel, which produces the magazine Challenge. They are also founder members of the Workers' Advice Centre (WAC-Ma'an), a trade union centre which organises both Jewish and Arab workers, including Palestinian workers in the occupied territories. They corresponded with Daniel Randall of Workers' Liberty about the class struggle in Israel/Palestine. The interview was facilitated by Roni Ben Efrat of ODA.

For more information on ODA, visit their Facebook page at bit.ly/2NxQeBS

What does the passing of the "Nation State Law" mean for the class struggle, and struggles against racism, in Israel? How are these struggles linked?

Yacov Ben Efrat (YBE): We consider The Nation State Law to be a political "putsch" by the current ultra-right wing government against the Israeli Supreme Court, and a further step to delegitimise the Zionist left. The Law, which has been given constitutional status, states that Israel is a Jewish state for the Jewish people, and denies in very explicit terms the national and collective rights of the Palestinian people.

And while this Law represents Binyamin Netanyahu's worldview that a two-state solution is a bad solution, it is aimed at targeting the liberal and activist role of the Israeli Supreme Court, which, over the last 20 years, initiated a "constitutional revolution" based on the Basic Law "Human Dignity and Liberty", passed in 1992, which put human and democratic rights above and before the "Jewish" character of the State. The liberal-Zionist opposition to the Law proposed the original "Declaration of Independence" document as the basic law that rules the relation between

the state and its minorities on the basis of equality.

The latter, while assuring equal rights, did not prevent the racist and discriminatory policies of the Israeli state toward its Palestinian minority. The new Nation State Law is a retaliation against the latest rulings of the Supreme Court against the government, concerning the jailing of African asylum seekers, the ruling against unlawful building of settlements in the West Bank, and its general tendency to apply equal standards towards the Palestinian citizens. The Law also aims to delegitimise the Israeli Left as traitors and "Arab lovers".

This Law would have never come to light without the favourable international environment that resulted from the election of Donald Trump in the US, the Brexit movement in Britain, the political upheaval of the nationalist movements in Hungary, Poland, Austria, and Italy, and Putin in Russia. Netanyahu allies with these trends. He fought hard for the defeat of the Democratic Party, and favours the secessionist movement inside the EU. He represents those who try to weaken "independent" Supreme Courts, mocks the "fake news" media, indulges in rewriting of history and delegitimises liberal opposition as "Arab lovers" or "lovers of refugees". Netanyahu is part of the new international anti-liberal axis.

What are the latest struggles WAC-Ma'an is involved with?

Assaf Adiv (AA): WAC-Ma'an is one of four general workers' unions, which organise workers in different sectors. In the past decade, the labour movement in Israel has become more pluralistic, after years of dominance by the Histadrut, the main trade union centre. Two new union centres, WAC-Ma'an and Koach La'Ovdim (Power To The Workers), emerged, with a bottom-up and democratic approach.

Although smaller in numbers, WAC-Ma'an

has singled itself as a more political union, arguing that in the Israeli reality one cannot talk about solidarity between workers without being outspoken against the occupation and other instances of government racism such as the attempt to deport asylum seekers. In addition to organising Jewish and Arab workers, WAC-Ma'an also devotes much of its resources to social issues such as advancing employment and social benefits in poverty stricken communities, mainly the Arab population in Israel and defending and promoting the rights of poor and unemployed Palestinian workers in East Jerusalem and in settlements in the occupied West Bank.

WAC-Ma'an's organising has advanced immensely in 2018. On 30 August, it signed a collective agreement in the name of 250 teachers and kindergarten tutors of the educational association Hand in Hand, which operates six bi-lingual (Hebrew-Arabic) schools. This process took a whole year. Other workers in human rights organisations such as B'Tselem, Physicians for Human Rights, and The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants (HRM), have also joined WAC-Ma'an.

In addition to this work in Israel proper, WAC-Ma'an has been working for the past 18 years in East Jerusalem, organising around human rights, social rights, and labour rights issues, and in organising and advancing the rights of workers in Area C [part of the occupied Palestinian Territories, ruled entirely by Israel].

Activity reached a particular peak in 2017 with the signing of a collective agreement with the Zarfaty Garage, employing 45 Palestinian workers. This victory was won after four years of intense struggle, which went as far as the National Labour Court. The signing of this collective agreement has galvanised other workers in the area; WAC-Ma'an is currently involved in organising workers in a metal plant there. Another unique field we are involved in is organising in response to,

and to prevent, accidents at work in the construction industry. For more of our daily struggles and documents, please visit our website.

What is the political and organisational condition of the labour movement more broadly in Israel?

AA: In spite of big gaps between rich and poor, the Israeli economy is enjoying a steady surge of growth and standard of living as well as a decrease in unemployment. All this is happening under an ultra-right-wing government which is carrying out hate campaign against Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinians in the occupied territories. Unfortunately, this campaign is bearing fruit, and is adopted by blue-collar workers, many of whom, even when organised, hold racist views about Arabs and reactionary social positions in general.

In Israel, as in other countries today such as the USA, the UK, and other states where nationalism is raising its head, one cannot make the automatic equation of "blue collar" equals "Left".

While Netanyahu's special target in the past years has been the liberal left, and what it presents, the Histadrut is siding in most cases with the government and lately its leader Avi Nisancorn has even endorsed the candidacy of Minister Ze'ev Elkin (Minister of Jerusalem) to head the Jerusalem municipality. Elkin, a settler himself, is Netanyahu's candidate, and is known for his support of settlers and their interests.

This is not unusual. The Histadrut traditionally stands with the consensus and the government on any topic relating to Palestinians and the occupation, including supporting military attacks on Gaza. On the other hand, for its allies in the international labour movement it participates in some invisible "humanitarian" projects, unknown to the Israeli public.

Koach L'Ovdim, established in 2007, was created by forces coming from the left of the Labour Party and aiming to create a democratic, bottom-up opposition to the Histadrut. As such it preferred to blur its political agenda in a way that would not deter right-wing members. The organisation grew quickly (15,000, compared to 600,000 in the Histadrut and 2,500 in WAC-Ma'an), but at the price of silence on issues such as racism, the occupation, and human rights, claiming that workers' rights issues can and should be kept separate from these.

The two main [Histadrut-affiliated] teachers' unions run away from any moral and political stand vis-à-vis the right-wing, religious agenda which is imposed on schools today. In fact, a few individual liberal high-school teachers are more likely to stand up to the nationalist agenda imposed by the Ministry of Education than the official teachers' unions.

In light of all of this, it is highly important that a union like WAC-Ma'an can stand up for values of solidarity and justice, and show what these can mean in day-to-day life.

What about the political left? We're aware of Omdim Beyachad / "Standing Together"; what's your assessment of this

Left antisemitism: what it is and how to fight it

Since Jeremy Corbyn became leader of the Labour Party a number of political storms have taken place in which Corbyn and the wider left have been accused of antisemitism.

Some on the left contend such accusations are "smears", with no basis in reality, fabricated by right-wing forces to impede the rise of the left.

We disagree. We have argued for many years that certain aspects of the political common sense dominant on the far left, particularly in terms of how it views the Israel/Palestine conflict have antisemitic implications.

This pamphlet republishes a selection of articles written by members and supporters of Workers' Liberty, along with an interview with the late Marxist theorist Moishe Postone, and an article by the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky. It is a contribution to the political debate and education which we believe is necessary.

- Available for £3 from www.workersliberty.org/as-pamphlet
- A further selection of articles can be found here: workersliberty.org/left-as



s in Israel/Palestine



initiative? Is Da'am/ODA involved in any way? If not, what is Da'am's current orientation?

YBE: The political left is in disarray. The political scene is divided between an Arab nationalism of sorts, and a liberal-Zionism of sorts. This division facilitates the right's attempts to bolster its rule by inciting against the Palestinian "enemy" and the liberal-Zionist "traitors".

The main party on the left, Hadash, is run by the Israeli Communist Party. [Hadash participates in an electoral coalition, the Joint List, with a number of Arab nationalist and semi-Islamist parties.] The CP supports the Assad regime in Syria, and the discredited Palestinian Authority led by Mahmoud Abbas. The Arab nationalist at-Tajamuh Party holds an ultra-nationalist view, and generally follows the policies of Qatar. The Islamic Movement follows Turkey's Erdogan.

Standing Together represents the coming-together of the CP and the left-Zionist Meretz party. These parties both advocate a two-states settlement, but they differ ideologically, the first being orthodox communist and the other liberal-Zionist.

Da'am today does not believe that the two-state solution is viable anymore. Da'am seeks to work for a solidarity movement of Palestinian and Jewish democratic forces, aiming for a single democratic state for both Israelis and Palestinians, as part of a democratic Middle East. The potential for this was represented by the Arab Spring, which was drowned in blood by a very wide coalition of Gulf States, along with Iran and Russia, and with the silent encouragement or compliance of the West.

We believe that the only way to reach peace and equality for all will involve the defeat of the Fatah-Hamas duo that not only collaborates with the occupation, but strangles its own people. This struggle is intimately connected to the struggle to defeat the right wing in Israel. It is part of the broader fight to defeat fascist trends internationally, and the pre-

sent regimes in the Middle East including Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Workers' Liberty believes that a two-state settlement is the only settlement around which Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian workers could feasibly unite, and is a necessary transitional settlement towards closer unity or federation. Others on the far left see any expression whatsoever of Israeli-Jewish national rights as inadmissible. What is your view on this?

YBE: We in Da'am supported the two-states position from the day we were founded, but the political reality, the reality in the Middle East, has turned this position into an excuse for the continuation of the present situation. It freed Israel from direct responsibility for the densely-populated Palestinian cities, and it gave the Palestinian Authority the excuse to continue ruling in collaboration with the occupation. In reality, there is no political force in Israel, including the Labour Party, that believes that such a solution is possible.

We now envision one democratic state, but that doesn't mean that we believe as many supporters of a one-state solution do, that we can rewind the clock to before 1948 and make Israeli "apartheid" disappear. We look forward to a future in which Israelis and Palestinians will decide, on a basis of equal rights and opportunities, their future. We know this will be a long and painful process.

The political approaches of "BDS" are now largely hegemonic in global Palestinian solidarity activism; Workers' Liberty believes the demand to "boycott Israel" cuts against the need to build direct, practical solidarity with Israeli workers and the left, and could have antisemitic implications. What is your view on this question?

YBE: We do not support the BDS movement. However, we do support specific and targeted boycotts, for examples against settlements in the Occupied Territories or

against companies involved in military cooperation with Israel. The BDS movement as a political phenomenon is something else; it pretends to present an alternative strategy for the liberation of Palestine when in reality it represents a simplistic shortcut, overlooking fundamental issues and reality itself.

For example, BDS ignores the role of the Palestinian Authority and its collaboration with Israel. This is a severe impediment to the struggle against the occupation. Neither the PA nor Hamas boycott Israeli products. Boycotting democratic forces in Israel which are seeking dialogue and cooperation with Palestinians to end the occupation does not make any sense. Bashing Israel while keeping silent over massive atrocities (for example by the Assad regime and others) discredits the BDS movement and strengthens anti-Semitic inclinations.

Hamas's ideology is racist by definition, against all "heretics", and Fatah's nationalist trends use antisemitic discourse to cover up their collaboration with Israel, and their corruption and anti-democratic practices against any internal opposition.

What can working-class internationalists do to support your struggles?

AA: The work that WAC-Ma'an does in East Jerusalem and Area C shows how between "boycotting Israel" (including Israeli left-wing forces within it!) and supporting Israel there is another way, which struggles to end the occupation and support struggles for workers' and human rights. We should mention for example the long term cooperation that WAC-Ma'an had for several years with the British trade union Unison, that helps us to advance our work in East Jerusalem and Area C.

This is one example that can be a model for progressive forces and movements in the world who want to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people with a universal approach that helps to build a new world of justice for all.

Go sober for October and help raise money for the AWL?

£15,000

Workers' Liberty has launched a new fundraising appeal to raise £15,000 between now and June 2019.

Workers' Liberty exists to build support for the argument that capitalism must be replaced by collective ownership and sustainable planning for people's needs — socialism. Please help us amplify our voice. We have no big money backers. We rely on supporters, friends and readers who consider our work to be a good cause to help us financially. Why not go sober for October and send the money you would have spent on Pinot Noir, brown ale or vodka and tonic — whatever is your favourite tipple — to Workers' Liberty? You'll feel better, we'll be better off.

So far we have raised £1605.

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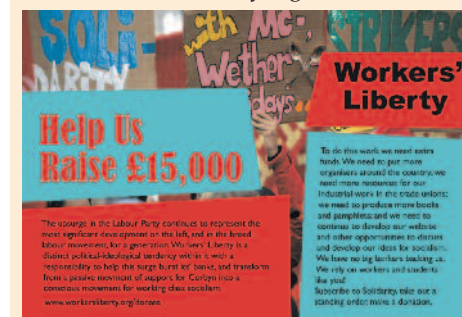
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Satanic Verses, thirty years on

By Matt Cooper

Last month saw the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

Rushdie's sprawling novel defies summary: interlinking stories meld scurrilous fantasies, dark humour and cutting political satire directed not only at Islam, but British racism and Indian immigrants' attempts to adapt. It is an honest attempt to deal with the warping pressures of racism, religion and cultural dislocation.

When it was published in September 1988 there was no spontaneous grassroots opposition. According to Kenan Malik in *From Fatwa to Jihad*, one early move against the book was in India, where pressure from Jammāt-e-Islami led to the book being banned there in October. (Jammāt is an Islamist organisation with the main goal of bringing in Islamic states in Pakistan and Bangladesh).

Then literature radiated out vilifying the book as a blasphemous insult against Muslims. In early October 1989 Jammāt, with Saudi funding, established the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs (UKACIA) to attempt to have *The Satanic Verses* banned. Initially it was a pressure group trying to influence government policy rather than mobilising on the streets.

UK Muslim opposition to *The Satanic Verses* which appears to have come about without the direction of Jammāt or other Islamists was almost certainly informed by their literature. The first sizeable demonstration and book burning was in Bolton in December 1988, although it attracted little media attention.

A more media savvy demonstration was held in Bradford in January 1989, which reportedly included book burning. The emerging demands of the demonstrators were that the book be banned, and the UK blasphemy laws be extended to cover religions other than Christianity.

BANNED

At this point Jammāt turned to mass demonstrations, calling one in Pakistan, where the book was already banned.

The demonstration in February 1989, which for some reason targeted the US embassy, resulted in at least five demonstrators being killed. Two days later the theocratic leadership of Iran issued a fatwa, a death sentence, on Rushdie.

The competition between Saudi-backed groups and Iranian rhetoric (fatwa) breathed life into the campaign against *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie was given police protection and went into hiding for many years. The book's Japanese translator was murdered. In Turkey thirty-seven died in an attempt on the life of the translator there. The Norwegian publisher was shot, and the Italian translator stabbed; both were seriously injured.

It is likely that if the book had been published in the mid-seventies, rather than the late-eighties, it would have not been the focus of such anger. Why?

First, by 1988 there was an race between Saudi Arabia and Iran to win the leadership of Muslims globally by supporting various political Islamist movements, including armed groups.

Second, in the 1970s few Muslims would have taken that as their main identity, rather than black, or Asian, or a national origin. Nor was racism focused on religion; the term Islamophobia was not in wide use and few

racists could distinguish a Sikh from a Hindu. The rise of religious identity came in part through the development of 1980s state-sponsored multicultural policy that sought to neatly package people into groups with identifiable leaders with whom the business of community relations could be transacted.

Third, in the 1970s British Asians were engaged in a number of struggles against state, fascist and other forms of racism, and for equality with the trade union movement and the labour force. Organisations from the Indian Workers' Associations to the Asian Youth Movement worked in a broadly secular and socialist framework.

MIGRANTS

By the late 1980s many of the unionised jobs in which these migrants and their descendants worked had gone.

The trade union movement that had eventually looked like it might be willing to accept Asian workers and help them organise (at the time of the Grunwick strike, 1976-78), had been hobbled. Struggle was now more often focused on getting funding for "communities" from local government, once again, encouraging identity and communitarian politics.

The organised left supported Rushdie's freedom of speech, opposed the fatwa and called out the Islamist attempt to sidetrack the Asian working class for the right wing fraud that it was, while opposing racist demonisation of Muslims.

The left-wing Campaign Group of MPs opposed the calls to ban the book and argued for the law on blasphemy to be repealed. Tony Benn tabled a symbolic motion to that effect in the House of Commons.

Only two members of the Campaign Group opposed him. Notably, Bernie Grant called for extension of the law to include Islam and called on Penguin not to publish a



paperback edition. Grant was a militant but inconsistent left-winger who thought it more important to side with Muslims as the underdog with "nothing to live for but their faith".

Although the campaign to ban *The Satanic Verses* did not achieve its stated goal, in many ways it won. The worst aspect of this is that the muddled thinking demonstrated by Bernie Grant has become more common.

In early 1989 the SWP was clear in stating "No to censorship. No to racism" and was the last publication to interview Rushdie before he went into hiding. In the subsequent years the group has become so fixated on "British Muslim" identity as "a source of self-confidence" and the idea of "Muslims joining with others to oppose not only Islamophobia, but also war and wider injustices"

that its commitment to the freedom of speech to criticise reactionary religious ideology has all but disappeared (see box).

Jammāt, on the other hand, consolidated its leadership and broader influence. UKACIA and other Sunni Islamist groups (including the Muslim Brotherhood aligned Muslim Association of Britain) came together to form the Muslim Action Front which organised a London demonstration in May 1989. This was bravely opposed by Women Against Fundamentalism, whose roots that could be traced back to the Asian Youth Movement.

In 1997 the anti-Rushdie alliance morphed into the Muslim Council of Britain, purporting to speak for British Muslims. It was given power for many years by the British state's complicity with it.

The SWP: facing both ways on Rushdie

By Matt Cooper

In 1989 the SWP had a clear position on the freedom to criticise reactionary religious ideology.

Under the banner of "No to censorship, No to racism", they supported Rushdie against what they called "Islamic Fundamentalists" and carried a sympathetic interview with Rushdie.

Over the years their pronouncement became ambiguous. At the time of the Jyllands-Posten Mohammed cartoon furore of 2005-6 leading SWPer Alex Callinicos (*Socialist Worker*, 11 February 2006, bit.ly/2zZRkDd) argued that *The Satanic Verses* was a special case of "a complex work of art by an author of Indian Muslim origins who was trying explore the roots of the faith into which he was born". But this sympathetic stance was undermined by Callinicos's support for the original form of the New Labour government's Racial and Religious Hatred Bill that sought to outlaw "abusive and insulting behaviour" against religion. (The House of Lords rightly amended the Bill to limit it to threatening behaviour, adding that it must be intended to stir up religious hatred.)

The original Bill might well have led to the banning of a work such as *The Satanic Verses* on the grounds of offending believers. It thus met the demands of the anti-Rushdie protestors of 1989.

Equally abjectly, Callinicos accepted the bona fides of the Iranian fatwa, "the book caused great offence among Muslims ... and led to the Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini issuing a judgment (fatwa) condemning Rushdie to death." The Iranians did nothing in the five months after the book was published, during which time it was reviewed in the Iranian press. Khomeini only moved against it in response to Saudi-backed protests against the book.

In a further article (*Socialist Worker*, 9 February 2011, <http://bit.ly/2IOAji8>) Yuri Prasad defended multiculturalism after attacks by the Prime Minister David Cameron, but failed to defend *The Satanic Verses*, rather arguing that it had led to Islamophobia and saying: "Some liberals became unable to separate Rushdie's right to publish his book from the need to defend an entire religious minority being painted as intrinsically intolerant". Prasad entirely buys into the Islamist narrative stating that, "to many Muslims *The Satanic Verses* came to symbolise the humili-

ation and discrimination they suffered, both in Britain and throughout the world."

The SWP continue to attempt to face both ways on the issues. Reviewing Rushdie's memoirs in 2012 Gareth Jenkins wraps opposition to censoring Rushdie in a pernicious argument (*Socialist Review* November 2012, bit.ly/2EhCwDM). He rejects Rushdie's opposition to the spread of Islamist ideas, suggesting a "more complex" understanding is needed. This turns out to be excusing these ideas on the grounds that the book was "the last straw for an oppressed minority whose only bulwark against a hostile, racist society seemed to be religious identity".

And in a recent article to mark the 30th anniversary of the book's publication (*Socialist Worker* 25 September 2018, bit.ly/2OdTWFx), Hassan Mahamdallie hides mild criticism of censorship under a long preamble that suggests the anti-Rushdie movement was a response to Western governments pursuing anti-Muslim policies internationally and domestically through the 1970s and 1980s.

He concludes that the "British Muslim" identity that grew out of the movement has opened up options for the left.

Under the Banner of Marxism

By Paul Vernadsky

The AWL's new book, *In Defence of Bolshevism*, will upset many people on the left – and is warmly welcomed for doing so.

The bulk of the book consists of texts by the foremost Heterodox Trotskyist, Max Shachtman. In 1949, Shachtman published *Under the Banner of Marxism*, originally written as an answer to Ernest Erber, a former Third Camp comrade who had just deserted.

In this review, however, I want to pay attention to the book's introduction by Sean Matgamna, tying in the texts with today.

The introduction spares no left tendency from withering criticism. The book is an indictment of Corbynism and the detritus on the revolutionary left.

The introduction describes the Corbynite left as "politically inchoate preliminary ingathering". The *Morning Star* epitomises the politics behind Corbynism. The paper of the Communist Party of Britain, the remnants of loyal British Stalinism – the *Morning Star* is a left "that does not know, positively, what it is for". A viable new left "will never be raised on the mildewed crumbs of old Stalinist politics".

Despite the political shift to the left, none of the Blairite structural changes to the Labour Party have so far been reversed, even by the current "democracy review".

Blame for the Stalinist influence on Corbynism is laid with the dire state of official "Trotskyism". Leon Trotsky's politics were the continuation of Bolshevism after the Russian revolution degenerated. But Trotskyism itself underwent its own putrefaction. After the USSR expanded and consolidated in Eastern Europe, Orthodox Trotskyists were drawn into supporting further advances of Stalinism in China, Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, etc.

Much of Orthodox Trotskyism collapsed into Zinovievism – the illusion, derived from Stalinism – that the Bolshevik party gained power because it was a large, tightly-organised "machine" in the hands of a designated "Great Man". It could be replicated by mimicking and parroting "Bolshevik" forms.

In the mid-1970s Gerry Healy sold the WRP, the largest British Trotskyist group, to the Libyan government. Over subsequent years the WRP received millions of pounds in return for spy reports on Arab political dis-

sidents and propaganda for the Libyan and Iraqi regimes. In the early 1980s the WRP provided the Labour left with a weekly paper, *Labour Herald*. Nominally headed by Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight, it was edited by the WRP's Steven Miller. *Labour Herald* published rancid antisemitic cartoons and comments on the Middle East. Livingstone and Knight held hands with the WRP, who were in the grip of Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein.

By the 1980s the biggest Trotskyist group was Militant, led by Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe. Militant came to dominate the Liverpool labour movement and had a block of Labour councillors to control events. In July 1984, when the miners' strike was at its height, Militant chose to do a short-term deal with the Tories. Derek Hatton and his friends bought themselves safety from prosecution for a year. Once the miners were beaten, the Tories came back for them, and Labour leader Neil Kinnock completed the rout.

The SWP stood aside from the Benn surge and the Labour Party, smirking behind Tony

Cliff's silly analogy: "If you want to push a wheelbarrow, you don't sit in it". In 1979, as the Labour left erupted, the SWP turned away from the labour movement and towards exclusive focus on building themselves as a toy-town pseudo-Bolshevik "party". Their shibboleth, the "theory of the downturn" meant when the miners went on strike, the SWP denounced support groups as "left-wing Oxfam". The SWP appealed to Labour activists to "join the socialists" – to abandon the fight in the mass political labour movement and join those who preached that general fightback was hopeless.

The Orthodox "Fourth International" led by Ernest Mandel spawned the IMG in Britain. It was a wildly unstable organisation, kept together by a common adherence to "the International". The IMG zig-zagged in and out of the Labour Party. More recently its remnants sojourned in George Galloway's Respect, then the Green Left faction of the Green Party, followed by Left Unity. It breeds and bequeaths political confusion. In France,

the Mandelite organisation (NPA) drifts towards social democratic norms: a party of "adherents" rather than activists, where members in official union positions are outside party supervision, where the party's publications are desultorily produced and little circulated.

A lot of people who think of themselves as Marxists have grown indifferent or hostile to any project of building a Marxist organisation. They march under the idea that they should "develop the influence of Marxism" by promoting left-wing ideas in the existing broad labour movement. They claim no socialist organisation beyond the Labour Party and its coteries is needed. But it is impossible to meaningfully develop the "influence of Marxism" as a revolutionary force without building a revolutionary organisation. The experience of Russia, Germany, Spain, France, Chile and countless other class struggles demonstrates this beyond doubt.

In Shachtman's texts, he brilliantly deconstructs the arguments Erber had used to rationalise giving up on revolutionary Marxist politics. He shows how Erber slipped from a critique of the 1917 Russian revolution into the prettification of New Deal USA. Shachtman expertly laid out the Marxist theory of the bourgeois state to expose Erber's descent into social democratic reformism. He exposed how Erber's anti-Stalinism drove him away from the socialist project of working class self-emancipation. Objections to Marxism invariably become an admonishment against workers daring to take power and rule in their own class interests.

Shachtman also explained the kind of revolutionary party necessary for the working class to free itself. Recalling the best days of the Bolsheviks, he showed that such a party must analyse reality and take its own theory seriously. Only through democratic debate and the fight for clarity can a Marxist tendency thrive to transform the existing labour movement.

Shachtman recognised the tremendous pressures exerted on working class socialists by the mechanisms of capitalism and the terror of Stalinism. The only answer is to build up and develop our intellectual resources and weld an activist force that fights for those ideas.

Socialist consciousness is the irreplaceable condition of working class self-liberation: this book shows why we fight for it.

In Defence of Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



Edited by Sean Matgamna

Max Shachtman's *Under the Banner of Marxism*, which forms the bulk of this book, deserves to be considered one of the classic polemics of the Marxist movement, alongside *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *Anti-Dühring*, and others. It defends the Bolsheviks, their revolution, their work to build a revolutionary socialist movement, and the continued relevance of their approach.

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Ten times the price, but...

By Martin Thomas

The history of the old Labour left weekly *Tribune* was not a glorious one. In its early years, which were also the time of the Moscow Trials, it supported Stalin's regime in the USSR uncritically.

Between 1947 and 1950 it was firmly on the side of the USA and NATO in the Cold War.

From the mid-1980s, under Nigel Williamson and then Phil Kelly as editors, its politics dissolved into soft-leftist alignment with Labour's establishment, and its last 30 years were a slow but dismal slide into extinction.

But in its best years, with Michael Foot in

the 1950s, and to some degree even in its not-so-good years under Richard Clements' long editorship, 1960 to 1982, it had the merit of giving some forum for ideas and debate. Notoriously, readers turned to its lively letters pages first, before the straight articles.

Now *Tribune* has been relaunched as a bi-monthly magazine. The new magazine shares with the old newspaper a propensity for soft leftism, and with some of its phases a propensity for deference to Stalinism; but the better side of the old paper is missing.

Not only no letters. No debate. And an extraordinary price. Presumably to cover the costs of the tricky graphic design, the new *Tribune* costs £6.95, though really none of its

articles are more substantial than the old newspaper's. The old *Tribune* of 1941 cost the equivalent then of 60p now; the *Tribune* of 1990 (having to inflate its price to compensate for shrinking circulation) the equivalent of £1.55, still cheap enough for a lower-paid worker to buy regularly.

A pity. Let's hope it finds ways to improve.



Michael Foot edited *Tribune* when it had a lively letters page

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- ✚ Independent working-class representation in politics.
- ✚ A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- ✚ A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- ✚ Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- ✚ A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- ✚ Open borders.
- ✚ Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- ✚ Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- ✚ Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- ✚ Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



Events

Saturday 13 October

Unity demo to oppose the far-right in London
12 noon, BBC, Portland Place, W1A 1AA
bit.ly/2OyLe1o

Monday 15 October

Sheffield Radical Readers reads Red Rosa
6pm, Sheffield Students' Union, S10 2TG
bit.ly/2C3DRM2

Wednesday 17 October

Love Our Colleges: march, rally and lobby for FE funding
12 noon, Waterloo Place, London SW1Y 4BE
bit.ly/2OboS9U

Saturday 20 October

People's Vote March
noon, Park Lane, London
bit.ly/brx20

26-17 October

Europe for the many; a left strategy for transforming Europe
LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE
bit.ly/2ynvFTi

Tuesday 30 October

Rise of the Precarious Workers — National Demo
8am, Transport for London, 197 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NJ
bit.ly/2D543bi

Have an event you want listing?
Email:
solidarity@workersliberty.org

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Unite: Coyne's appeal to Certification Officer fails

LABOUR

By a Unite member

Gerard Coyne, the narrowly-defeated right wing candidate in last year's Unite General Secretary election, has lost his appeal to the Certification Officer on all counts.

The decision is not unexpected, following his previous failure to overturn the result of the election by appealing first to the Certification Officer and then to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT). It is a welcome knock-back for the right wing within the union.

There can be no justification for Coyne's attempt to seek revenge on Unite after losing the election by dragging the union through the courts, costing valuable time and money which could have been put to much better use for all members of Unite.

The pro-McCluskey group within United, the United Left (UL), has rightly been highly critical of Coyne's negative campaigning style and his cosy alliance with Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* and senior right wing figures (e.g. Tom Watson) in the Labour Party: what the UL fails to mention is that many of the other complaints they've raised against Coyne (misuse of membership data and union facilities) could equally well have been made against McCluskey's campaign.

The UL has attempted to suggest that Coyne's defeat means all is well within the union: "On a positive note, it (i.e. Coyne's appeal) might have opened some members' eyes to what damage right wingers can cause to our union if allowed to gain ground. United Left remains convinced that only through a left progressive agenda can we create a democratic, lay member-led, fighting back union that stands up for



Coyne supporters protesting at Unite HQ last year.

its members.

"We now look forward to putting this damaging episode behind us and uniting behind our democratically-elected General Secretary and our left-led Unite Executive Council — standing up to bad bosses; fighting for better pay and conditions; bringing union organisation to the unorganised; fighting racism and inequality wherever we find it; and working hard to get this despicable Tory Government out of office and fighting to win a Labour victory under Jeremy Corbyn. Bring it on!"

Others on the left are less sanguine. The danger is that Coyne's failure will encourage complacency on the left. Shortly after last year's general secretary election, Scottish UL supporters put out a document noting the narrowness of McCluskey's victory and the failure of the UL to translate branch nominations for McCluskey into votes of members.

"There is nothing wrong with our attention on winning elections,

but the win needs to be for the purpose of advancing policies and actions that support working people and their families. The problem is when electioneering for one individual over another in itself is seen as politics.

"Instead, we should be engaging with members in workplaces and communities as part of the approach to building a politicised and motivated membership who are then enthused and inspired to take part in the union and all its democratic processes, not just in the postal vote for occasional choices of Executive Council or General Secretary candidates.

"If we are to achieve our aims as United Left, then our priority must be: rebuilding grassroots connections; re-establishing lay membership control at all levels of the union; and reversing the trend of a fall in membership, a fall in turnout in elections, and a fall in the numbers of people voting for left candidates."

Central Line drivers strike

By Ollie Moore

Drivers on London Underground's Central Line struck on 5 October, with a further strike planned for 7 November.

The issues in the dispute, organised by the Aslef union, closely parallels those in an RMT drivers' dispute on the Piccadilly Line; workers are resisting an increasingly authoritarian and disciplinary management culture.

The RMT is also balloting driver members on the Central Line for strikes in two separate disputes, one paralleling the Aslef dispute and another to demand the rein-

statement of Paul Bailey, a driver sacked after "failing" a drugs test, despite the test showing him to be within the allowed limit for cannabinoid substances.

A union activist told *Solidarity*: "It's time for some joined-up thinking here. RMT should name new strikes in the Piccadilly Line dispute, and both unions should coordinate action on the Central Line."

Meanwhile, a number of potential disputes are developing on London Underground sta-



tions, with the RMT considering ballots of station staff at Baker Street, over management bullying and the victimisation of a union rep, and on Bakerloo Line stations over understaffing.

Wildcat pub strike wins

By Sacha Ismail

Last week we reported the wildcat strike by workers at the “community owned” Ivy House pub in South London, members of the Bakers’ Union (bit.ly/2NugqNK).

In this case “community owned” meant more “Big Society” than “workers’ control”.

Shortly after the last Solidarity went to press on Tuesday 2 October, the Ivy House workers, who had kept the pub shut down completely for three days, won completely. The union is recognised, zero hours contracts will be replaced by fixed hours ones, and the four sacked workers are reinstated with back pay until a disciplinary process has ended.

The nature of the Ivy House and its relationship to the surrounding community made life quite difficult for the employer and gave the workers some advantages – but they still faced the same disadvantages and difficulties as other service workers on zero hours contracts in a small workplace. Despite the pub’s image and circum-



stances, the Ivy House management moved fast and ruthlessly to get rid of and replace the sacked workers.

They were stopped only by the decisive action the workers took – not only walking out “unofficially” without going through the long and onerous legal balloting procedure but moving their action forward four days at short notice to forestall management.

If the Ivy House workers had gone through an official ballot, they

would most likely still be balloting now and not able to go on strike until the end of October!

So the Ivy House battle and the victory pose big issues about helping the unorganised organise and reviving the trade union movement; but also about defying and fighting to scrap the anti-union laws.

• For an interview with the workers by the New Socialist see: bit.ly/2C3I2qZ

Equal pay strike at Glasgow council

By Anne Field

The GMB and Unison have served notice on Glasgow City Council of a two-day strike (23 and 24 October) as part of their ongoing campaign to win equal pay claims for thousands of female City Council employees.

The unions’ strike ballots resulted in pro-strike majorities of 98% (GMB) and 99% (Unison). Up to 8,000 Council workers could be taking part in the strike.

The strike might be described as a “Labour legacy” dispute.

Prior to losing power in last year’s council elections, successive Labour administrations introduced the pay and grading scheme deemed discriminatory by the courts, created Arms-Length companies in a bid to frustrate equal pay claims, and spent some £2.5

million in fighting the claims in the courts.

In its council election campaign last year the SNP promised to resolve the dispute. But the new SNP administration initially continued to fight the equal pay claims in the courts. It then dropped legal proceedings and promised to resolve the claims through negotiations.

Although the SNP has now been in power for nearly 18 months, there is still no sign of the claims being paid. Hence the strike ballot of Unison and GMB members.

The now SNP-controlled City Council responded to notification of the strike by dismissing the unions’ timescale for reaching agreement as “unrealistic” and telling them that there would be no further negotiations with them until the strike had been called off.

The Council expressed its readiness to continue negotiations with

Unite (which has a small number of members with equal pay claims) and Action4Equality (run by lawyer Stefan Cross and representing thousands of the women workers).

But Unite and A4E refused negotiations in the absence of the GMB and Unison.

Individual SNP councillors have also denounced the strike on social media, claiming that the unions did nothing when Labour was in control of the City Chambers, and that the strike would cause suffering to those most in need of Council services.

Labour Party members should be to the fore in supporting the strike – physically demonstrating their support for the women workers, and their opposition not just to the SNP administration but also to the record of its Labour predecessors.

Unison challenges council’s institutional racism

By a Lambeth Unison member

Lambeth Unison are pushing Lambeth Council to act to tackle institutional racism at the Council.

A survey last year showed the majority of Unison black members at Lambeth Council felt they were treated differently from their white colleagues. We took the results to management who agreed to commission an independent survey into race equality and start work on reducing the race pay gap at the Council. Since that promise the Chief Executive has been replaced, the problem is not going away and the independent investigator has still not been commissioned.

POINTS

It is not only the perception of black staff which points to a racism problem at the Council.

Staff at the top of the scales are overwhelming white, despite the workforce as a whole being 59% black and minority ethnic (BME). Once you get to grades with wages of £40,000 and above, posts become more and more disproportionately filled by white staff. The latest release from the Council shows all but one of the top 25 senior managers are white. Human Resources have also admitted that while 46% of job applications are from people from a BME background, only 36% of people appointed are BME. On the other hand while 25% of applications are from white people, 34% of people appointed are white.

This problem is intensified by the bulk of job cuts falling on staff on lower pay, whilst management jobs are protected.

Following an anonymous letter from Black Workers sent to Councillors, unions and the press, *Guardian* ran on a report including a quote from our Assistant Branch Secretary Hassina Malik:

“In March 2017 we shared the results of the survey with the councillors and with the chief executive of the council. They agreed it was important to address the problems we had highlighted and said they would engage a third party – someone independent – to look into staff experience of institutional racism and the survey.

“More than a year later that person has still not been engaged. The council have reneged on their agreement to investigate and address institutional racism.” She said the situation in relation to race was “seriously escalating”.

Andrew Travers, the new Chief Executive of Lambeth Council has responded to media reports by sending an email to all staff saying that; “I do not accept the claim of institutional racism at Lambeth council.” This was mirrored by actions of Labour Councillors who in ward meetings tried to amend motions to remove any mention of institutional racism. They wish to concentrate on leadership programmes for black staff rather than broadening the discussion to issues with the organisation. The never spoken assumption behind this approach is that black staff aren’t engaged or promoted because they are worse candidates and the huge discrepancy between racial groups in pay is down to talent or confidence. This is absolute nonsense, the lack of black senior managers is not the whole problem but is a symptom of an issue affecting staff of all grades – racism in society and racism at work.

We are disappointed that despite professing to take the issues seriously management continue to deny the experiences of black staff and their own stats show institutional racism.

We don’t pretend that Lambeth Council is the worst employer for black staff. We know it is better than many. But better than some others isn’t good enough – Unison will fight for equality for our members.

Bolton hospital workers strike over insulting pay offer

By Claudia Raven

More than 600 Bolton hospital cleaners, porters, facilities and catering workers have decided to go ahead with a 48 hour strike for pay after an insulting offer from management.

The staff are employed by Bolton iFM, a wholly owned subsidiary of the hospital trust, and have been denied the pay rise that directly

employed NHS staff on Agenda for Change terms have earned.

Under the Agenda for Change pay award this year, the lowest paid staff have seen a 10% raise. Staff were transferred from private contractors and the NHS into Bolton iFM in 2017, and the company signed an agreement stating that it would implement the nationally agreed NHS pay rates in full to all staff. When this agreement was broken, with staff re-

maining on the national living wage of £7.83 an hour, 97% voted to take strike action, with a turnout of 65%. Bolton iFM is now offering “at least” the living wage rate, calculated by the Living Wage Foundation, currently set at £8.75 an hour. This is still less than the current lowest NHS pay rate of £8.93 an hour.

The trust and its wholly-owned subsidiary could access funding in the short-term from the govern-

ment to cover the costs of the pay rise, but so far have failed to make an application.

Plans to create subsidiaries have now been defeated at Tees Valley after threatened strike action, and after strike action and Local Authority intervention in Wigan. NHS Improvement have now asked all trusts “paused” plans to create subsidiaries. Established subsidiaries in other trusts have cost more than £3.2 million in consultancy to set

up and have been found to offer poorer conditions to new starters.

In the context of ongoing cuts, moving staff off NHS terms and conditions is seen as a clever way to reduce costs. Industrial action has forced a “pause” for now, but both industrial and political action will be needed to reinstate staff like those in Bolton to the NHS.

The Bolton strike begins at 7am on Thursday 11 October.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

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Save the planet, stop fracking!

By Mike Zubrowski

On 8 October a scientists' panel convened by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, after surveying more than 6,000 scientific studies, reported that the world is on course for catastrophic warming by the end of the century, due to carbon emissions.

And this same week the first UK site for "horizontal fracking" looks set to start in Lancashire.

"Fracking" pumps pressurised liquid deep underground to fracture rock, releasing natural gas. "Horizontal fracking" also drills sideways, accessing larger underground areas.

Globally, fracking puts more fossil fuels into circulation; is energy-intensive; and often leaks methane. Methane also drives climate change, like the carbon dioxide released by burning gas. And locally, fracking can cause small earthquakes and poison the water.

Opposition by environmental activists and local communities has delayed and limited the growth of fracking. Fracking is banned in seven European countries. Horizontal fracking in Lancashire was rejected at parish, borough and county council levels, and in an appeal.

The pro-fracking Tory government overruled local democracy and gave this a go-ahead. Local opposition continues.

Meanwhile, in late September, three activists were given 15/16 months in prison for "public nuisance", and another got a suspended sentence. They

participated in a four-day non-violent protest, halting a convoy carrying drilling equipment, causing traffic problems.

Imprisonment for peaceful environmental protests is extremely rare. It is being appealed on a human rights basis.

Anti-fracking protests in Lancashire have managed to delay fracking but have faced increasing repression, with over 300 protesters arrested since January 2017.

This sentencing has been denounced by John McDonnell, by much of the environmental movement, and by over 1,000 academics in an open letter (bit.ly/3a-frack). To support the four protesters: bit.ly/s-frack.

Climate activists, energy workers and the labour movement should work together to prevent fracking and ensure serious investment in renewable energy, creating many green jobs and a sustainable society.

LABOUR

The Labour Party leadership advocates banning fracking, but so must the broader labour movement. GMB, which represents most energy workers, supports fracking.

They argue that it creates jobs, and that using UK-sourced gas is best. A motion to reconsider this position fell at their conference this summer. Climate activists often fail to engage with the labour movement.

GMB leaders have previously urged that "police and judges should take a firm line with anti-fracking protesters", saying that it



Anti-fracking protestors before their court case in Lancashire

is an issue of workers not being prevented from doing their jobs.

Workers are not being hurt or intimidated. Advocating increased repression against protesters will harm our class and the left in the long-run.

GMB should demand that workers are paid for the days they were due to work even if protesters prevented this, not side with bosses against protesters. Fundamentally, climate change will cause extreme destruction while investment in renewables could create more jobs. Trade union and Labour Party branches must call for the release of these activists.

Their struggle is a struggle for all our futures. The scientists report: "we are already seeing the consequences of 1°C of global warming through more extreme weather, rising sea levels and diminishing Arctic

sea ice..."

The Paris agreement resolved to keep warming below 2°C. The scientists say that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require "rapid and far-reaching" changes in economic organisation, plus technological fixes to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It is, as they say, "possible within the laws of chemistry and physics but doing so would require unprecedented changes".

2°C will raise global sea levels 10cm further, flooding huge areas. It will melt vast areas of the Arctic. Coral reefs, 70 to 90% of which will go even if the temperature rise is limited to 1.5°C, will almost all (over 99%) be destroyed.

Once the temperature rise tops 2°C, there is a serious and increasing risk of a runaway effect, in which the results of global warm-

ing release more carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere, and thus generate even more warming.

Each capitalist, and most capitalist governments, however, see more short-term economic gain for themselves in using fossil fuels. And, under capitalism, short-term profit for the ultra-rich governs life.

To turn the world round from the road to catastrophe, we need to support the environmental protests already underway, and to turn round the labour movement to fight for democratic and social control over the main levers of economic life.

• Saturday 1 December: Together For Climate Justice demonstra-

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